

Irvine Presbyterian Church
Irvine, Pennsylvania

HABS No. Pa.-516

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Revised by J. Howard Hicks

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 5-Pennsylvania

Historic American Buildings Survey
J. Howard Hicks, District Officer
134 East 10th Street, Erie, Pennsylvania

IRVINE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Irvine, Warren County, Pennsylvania

Owner (or Custodian)
Irvine Presbyterian Church, Incorporated.

Date of Erection
1839.

Architect
James M. Halliday.

Builder
Dr. and Mrs. William Armstrong Irvine.

Present Condition
Good.

Number of Stories
One.

Materials of Construction:
Cut and uncut sandstone, wood shingles, walnut, pine
and oak woods.

Other Existing Records:
Personal interview with present pastor, Rev. Ralph N. Mould.
Drawings, photographs.

Additional Data:
Bibliography-An illustrated History of the Commonwealth of
Pennsylvania, William H. Egle, M.D., Harrisburg,
published by DeWitt C. Goodrich & Co., 1876. Warren,
Erie and other counties.

History of Erie County, Pennsylvania, published by Warner
Beers and Co., Chicago, Illinois, 1884.

A twentieth century History of Erie County, Pennsylvania,
published by the Lewis Publishing Co., John Miller,
historian, 1909.

History of Erie County, Pennsylvania, two volumes,
Historical Publishing Co., 1925, Topeka and Indianapolis,
by J. E. Reed (John Elmer).

Historical collection of the State of Pennsylvania by
Sherman Day, Philadelphia, Pa., 1843. (Title page of
history destroyed, impossible to give publisher).

History of Warren County, Pa., edited by J. S. Shenck,
assisted by W. S. Rann, Syracuse, N.Y., publishers, D. Mason
and Co., 1887.

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The western part of the state of Pennsylvania was a wilderness for many years, torn by wars between the original owners of the lands, the Indians; and the hordes of white settlers who ever pushed steadily westward, seeking lands and homes. Until Generals William Henry Harrison and 'Mad' Anthony Wayne conquered the Indians and drove them from their property, settlements were hazardous and few cared to undertake the subduing of the forest and its possessors.

At the same time the Revolutionary War had been fought and the country in lieu of pay had accepted the idea of "Donation Lands" or "Land Bounty Rights" for its defenders. On March 24, 1785, an act was passed providing for the appointment of an agent to examine the Donation Lands in Pennsylvania, and report on their general condition, indicating especially such as were unfit for cultivation. General William Irvine, who was assigned to this duty in August, 1785, reported unfavorably as to the value of the lands in the eastern part of the 2nd District, which were withdrawn. This territory was afterwards called the "Struck District". In his report General Irvine said-"a continuous chain of high barren mountains except small breeches for cracks, and rivulets to disembody themselves into the river".

In the same year, 1785, Brigadier General William Irvine went to Warren County and bought lands on which some of his descendants are still living. In 1797 Callender Irvine with his servant Black Tom tried to settle on the property procured by his father, the Revolutionary general. His first house stood on the ground now occupied by the R.R. station at Irvine, but was abandoned after the memorable "Pumpkin Flood" of 1805.

The Irvine family were of Scotch descent, some of their family having received a grant of land in Ulster County, Ireland, from King James VI of Scotland. General William Irvine died in 1804 while his son Callender was in command of the fort at Erie, Pa. Callender resigned this post and was made Commissary General of the United States, which post he filled for thirty-four years until his death.

Dr. William Armstrong Irvine, the son of Callender Irvine was born at the fort at Erie, Pa., the 28th of September, 1803, and died at his residence near Irvine, September 7th, 1886. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, studied medicine after graduation and removed to Irvine. He took a prominent part in the building of the first turnpike from Warren to Franklin, was a pioneer to secure the location of the Sunbury and Erie R.R., now

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the Philadelphia and Erie R.R. Among the first improvements at Irvine he had an iron foundry and woolen mill which he built. In 1834 he married a daughter of Stephen Duncan, a prominent planter on the Mississippi. She is buried in the graveyard back of the Irvine Presbyterian Church which was built by them in her lifetime. He is interred beside her. They had two daughters, Mrs. Thomas Biddle and Mrs. Thomas Newbold and one son who was accidentally shot when about twelve years of age. At the time of his death Dr. William Armstrong Irvine was the president of the Pennsylvania branch of the Society of the Cincinnati and vice-president of the general society of that name.

The Irvine Presbyterian Church is located about 8½ miles west of Warren, Pennsylvania on the right hand side of the road of Route six going east. The town where the church is situated is called Irvine, while the R.R. station is called Irvineton. The church stands on an elevation and at the rear of the church is a burial ground, with an enclosed portion in which lie the remains of the Irvine family.

Before 1839 Dr. and Mrs. William A. Irvine built the stone school house at Irvine, also a church for the Presbyterians. The stone school house was used until about 1873 when it was torn down, and the present union school built. Mrs. Irvine died while the church was being erected after the birth of her second daughter and her funeral services were conducted in the unfinished building.

The Irvine Presbyterian Church is a small church built to follow closely the colonial influence. This is shown in the arch over the windows, the mouldings, keystones, stylo of seats and other parts of this very attractive building. The mason, who was also the architect, James M. Halliday, came to America in 1830 and located at Utica, now known as Sugar Grove, Pa. The present trustees are Miss M. E. I. Newbold, Alfred Munson, Miss Elizabeth Christie, Peter Nelson, and Mrs. Clinton Johnson.

The front of the church faces to the north. It is built of unfinished sandstone with cut sandstone trim. The church is 25' 2" wide, 35' 2" in length and about 26' in height. It has no belfry. The entrance is placed exactly in the center of the north elevation, its sides of seven cut sandstone blocks, with the lintel, a plain out stone extending across the side blocks, having a raised keystone chiseled in the center and two slanting incised grooves each side of the keystone, evidently to carry out the idea of seven.

The double doors are set into the wall 1'8" being ornamented with four recessed panels. The door jambs are 1'4" and paneled to exactly match the paneling on the doors, having two recessed panels.

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These jambs are finished with brick mouldings of wood.

Between the doorway and the corners of the church are two false windows, shuttered and having arched tops set each with a keystone. Each arch of the windows consists of two segments having a keystone center. Each segment is divided into four parts by grooves. A window is located in the gable closed with a fan-shaped shutter and with an arched top to correspond with the other windows. The outside jambs of the windows are fluted with a plain base and cap to simulate pilasters, and an arched segment of wood also fluted. The side windows have two sash of 20 lights each, of plain glass, some of which is old and wavy. A tooled sandstone sill completes each window. Cut sandstone quoins ornament each corner of the building. The cornice is built up elaborately of moulding with returns on both sides. A chimney is placed on the west part of the building between the first and second windows. The walls are 1'8" thick. There is no frame work except for the roof. The water table is of tooled sandstone 4" thick. The roof has wooden shingles.

The interior has a wainscoting paneled with oblong panels of wood. The window jambs have panels to match the panels on the double doors, with plain moulding finish. The seats are embellished with raised panel carvings. The ends are also decorated with carvings. The present pulpit is small and the platform is small and low, reached by one step. Directly back of the platform and of the same length is a recess 10" deep. The pulpit arch is about 14' high. This recessed part has a wooden trim framing it, and also has a keystone ornamenting the apex. Brackets for oil lamps are placed on each side of this frame, also on the window frames and where ever light is needed. A recent addition is the gas fixtures, one of which is directly behind the pulpit. There are three windows on each side of the church, none at the back. The ceiling is a barreled ceiling. While the outside of the windows have segment arches at the tops, the arch of the pulpit is semi-circular. The ceiling height inside is 17' 3" in the center.

There are no national or state historical events, connected with this church except the fact that persons who were connected with it made records in the history and growth of the territory.

James Scott Baxter
Approved

Howard Hinkle, District Officer
Dec. 7th 1936.